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**MAYOR EMANUEL, CHIEF SANTIAGO CONGRATULATE
NEW CHICAGO FIRE DEPARTMENT GRADUATES**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Fire Department (CFD) Commissioner Jose Santiago today recognized 135 new graduates of the Fire Academy during a ceremony this evening at Navy Pier. Today's graduating class includes 27 military veterans, 10 members who are from families that experienced a line of duty death in the police or fire departments and 12 former members of the Chicago Police Department.

"There is an old saying – 'All people are created equal – then a few become firefighters,'" said Mayor Emanuel. "The men and women who serve in the Fire Department put their duty above danger, and in doing so, represent the very highest values of the city of Chicago. Today we welcome the next wave of heroes into their ranks."

Special achievement awards-were given to candidates who have excelled academically and or physically in the course. New firefighter Christopher Wagner received the Commissioners Award of Excellence and 10 graduating firefighters received either the Meritorious Command Award or the Award of Merit.

"The brave men and women who serve in the Chicago Fire Department work tirelessly to keep our communities safe," said Fire Commissioner Santiago. "Today, we not only salute the arrival of our new graduates, but we also salute their families too. As Fire Commissioner, I look forward to continuing our work together to ensure every resident feels safe knowing that CFD is always ready to serve and protect them."

Candidates graduating today completed a rigorous six-month training course at the Robert Quinn Fire Academy that includes courses for certification as an emergency medical technician (EMT) and Illinois Firefighter. Training includes not only basic firefighting skills, but operation in confined space and specific rescue techniques for search, rescue and extrication. The academy includes structures that provide realistic training scenarios

including multi-story buildings, zero visibility rooms and actual smoke and fire atmosphere.

This year, the emcee for the evening's event is Judy Hsu, former co-anchor of ABC7 News This Morning and ABC7 Eyewitness News' 4 p.m. The CFD has for the past 13 years partnered with ABC7 on Operation Save A Life to promote fire and carbon monoxide safety and prevention.

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